

Five Best Practices to Enable Records Management

By Joe Garber, Director of Market Strategy, ZANTAZ

"There is a significant changeover occurring in the architecture of records management solutions away from a separate records repository to in-place records management. The primary advantage of the move to in-place records management is to maintain the system of record and simplify implementation."—*"Records Management Architecture's Dramatic Shift,"* Forrester Research, June 2004

Records management (RM) is top-of-mind for many large organizations worldwide. This is partly because the benefits of having a single, central console for managing the retention of documents (e.g., email, IM, Microsoft Office files, PDFs, Web content) in multiple repositories are clear. These benefits include cost savings associated with discovery and storage, and lower risk associated with having a common set of policies applied to all electronic content in an organization.

Another—and equally prevalent—reason that RM is a hot button for IT executives is that it has many moving parts that are confusing and highly difficult to execute. Many CIOs have taken steps to enact an RM strategy and found that they have been undermined by changing requirements or overcome by trying to deploy what some consider a "boil the ocean" strategy that requires buy-in by too many constituents to achieve in a timely manner.

The truth is: an RM strategy doesn't have to be that complicated. By phasing in key building blocks that are flexible enough to evolve as requirements change, success can be much more attainable than it might seem. By building an RM system from the foundation up (vs. starting from the top) with components that can solve real problems today and can be easily modified to meet future requirements, an organization can more efficiently achieve its RM objectives.

This article provides a list of best practices that will help an organization take a practical first step toward achieving success

with its RM strategy. Once complete, you will understand that a fundamental building block to your strategy is deploying a content archiving solution as a cornerstone. But buyer beware: not all content archiving solutions are equal. Some archiving solutions do not provide the flexibility needed to allow you to change course when requirements change. Still others expose your organization to significant corporate risk by copying records to multiple applications that may or may not be disposed of at the right time. The smart choice for a message and file archiving solution will provide your organization with fundamental retention

management capabilities within the product and also allow your organization to extend this functionality to help you build a solid foundation for your enterprise RM initiative.

The Five Best Practices

1. Start with your most important content first.

Executing an RM strategy is complicated and requires the buy-in from many different constituents in order to be successful. In many cases, these strategies are set back by trying to do too much too quickly. Instead of trying to build an RM solution from the top down, many organizations construct it with best-of-breed applications from the bottom up—starting with addressing their most important content first.

Of all the content in your organization, what is the "most important"? The answer probably isn't a surprise. Email and

files represent 75% of all corporate intelligence.¹ Add to this the fact that US organizations spent a total of \$5.8 billion to analyze emails for discovery purposes in 2005² and that several million-dollar fines have been levied against corporations in the past few years for failure to capture, preserve and produce email—and it becomes clear that email and files are the most important electronic content to an organization.

The primary benefit of starting with archiving email and files as the first step in a phased approach is that it is much easier and more cost-effective to implement than a corporate-wide RM system. By capturing and preserving email today with an archiving solution (vs. saving them to backup tapes), an organization will have a much better idea what data it has in email and files—much more quickly. Why does this matter? Courts and regulatory bodies are getting more and more stringent about when data must be produced. For instance, the Supreme Court recently stated that starting December 1, 2006, a party that has been issued a discovery request must come to the first meeting having all the information in hand (and that the first meeting must take place within 14 days of the request). Having all relevant data indexed and easily available will help ensure

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that opposing counsel can't ask for an exorbitant amount of information to force a settlement.

2. Use the right application for the right problem.

Now that you've decided to build your RM system from the foundation up (starting with email and files), you must now turn your attention to identifying the content archiving solution that is best suited to be a key building block for your strategy.

Start with an application that is designed to handle the large volume of email and files that are created each day. Applications like ECM—or even RM—may on the surface seem appealing for this task because they are designed to manage electronic documents throughout their lifecycle. But these applications are made for much smaller volumes of data than what an organization generally creates with email and files—in many cases, a million messages and attachments a day. These applications also take much longer to

implement, leaving an organization susceptible to discovery requests in the interim. Further, ECM applications are generally not the right fit for the problem because they often require an organization to create a second copy of email and files to be stored (increasing corporate risk) or force users to swap between tools during the workday (lowering user productivity).

3. *Keep records “in place.”*

To minimize corporate risk and lower cost associated with storage and discovery, make sure that the content archiving solution you choose keeps these mission-critical records “in place.” In-place records management refers to the concept of retaining email and files in the application in which they were originally captured—as opposed to creating a second copy of the records in your RM system.

The primary benefit to this approach is a lower risk burden to the enterprise. By retaining only a single copy of each message or document, an organization is more likely to adhere to its policies about disposition of these records. In some cases where an organization copies email/files to a second repository, it is caught off guard when the copy is deleted (as dictated by its policy) but the original still remains well beyond its expiration date.

On top of this, maintaining records in place delivers clear discovery benefits in case an organization is the subject of a lawsuit. For example, because the messages and files remain in the archive, these records cannot be edited and the chain-of-custody for data that must be discovered is never broken. Failure to protect against these actions can cause an organization to incur costly regulatory fines, to settle frivolous lawsuits out of court, or to lose litigation that erodes shareholder value.

4. *Make your infrastructure as flexible as possible.*

Building an RM system from the ground up can be a risky proposition if

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your building blocks aren’t flexible enough to evolve as requirements change during construction—or even after.

To protect your organization, be sure to choose a content archiving solution with inherent retention management capabilities that also has a liberal API offering. The latter will allow your organization to more quickly integrate with your chosen RM system once you’ve embarked on an enterprise-wide RM initiative involving more than email and files. Archiving applications with rigid rules about connecting with their infrastructure may not allow an organization to integrate its RM application with the email/file archive at all, or at the very least may require undue engineering efforts to achieve the level of integration required for the job that may cost your organization hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The need for a flexible email/file archive doesn’t stop once it’s integrated with your RM system. RM is a relatively new and evolving concept, which may change over time and require your building blocks to change with it. You’ll want to search for a solution that can:

- ◆ Provide retention management capabilities as part of its core offering;
- ◆ Facilitate the extension of your current RM capabilities;
- ◆ Connect to any kind of system—including those for new/emerging types of data; and
- ◆ Integrate with other RM systems (since your organization may be involved with M&A activity that may require further integration).

Having an email/file archive with a robust set of APIs, along with an established

software developer’s kit (SDK) that will allow for further extension, is an insurance policy that may save your organization over the lifespan of your RM system.

5. *Ensure policies (and subsequent audits) are closely tied to each repository but not hard wired.*

Organizations that choose to build an RM system using a content archiving solution as a building block must ensure that the policies that are set at the system level are carried through and enforced in the email/file archive. This can only be accomplished by tight integration.

But be careful that the integration isn’t so tight that exceptions can’t be made. For example, in cases where an organization’s internal retention policies conflict with the requirements of a lawsuit (e.g., a company has a 90-day retention period but a case is expected to last a 12 months), retention policies in the archive must be set for “legal hold.” This will ensure that the email/files required for the lawsuit are not deleted and may save the organization millions in lost suits or settlements.

In many cases, the “duty to preserve” data is triggered much earlier than when a lawsuit is initiated, however. For example, a company would be expected to place a legal hold on email/files related to its R&D efforts on the day a newspaper article is printed about its product defects—and not when an associated lawsuit commences. As a result, an archiving solution must be flexible enough to accommodate multiple legal holds, sometimes across thousands of cases at the same time. ■

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Prior to ZANTAZ, he held several marketing and strategy positions at both startups and multi-national enterprises, including IBM, Silicon Graphics, Elance and Oberon Financial Technology. He began his career in public relations, with positions at the largest PR firm in the world (Hill & Knowlton) and as the assistant press secretary for a US Senator.

1. Enterprise Strategy Group

2. *Corporate Counsel*, estimates include \$4.6B of internal costs and \$1.2B in external costs for email discovery in 2005

Making a Choice in a Confusing Market

ZANTAZ EAS is a key building block for your RM system. EAS is an industry-leading email and file archiving solution that has retention management capabilities built right in, and can also be integrated with virtually any RM (or even ECM) system from partners.

Key to ZANTAZ’s solution is the concept of “records in place.” This is accomplished by developing pointers that are passed to the RM system for each document or message that is designated for reference/control by these applications. Because of this approach, ZANTAZ is able to connect with almost any RM application—as opposed to working with only a finite set of partners. In addition, ZANTAZ recently deployed a software developer’s kit (SDK) with APIs to provide its customers with the greatest amount of flexibility on the market.

If you would like to learn more about how to integrate your organization’s RM system to ZANTAZ EAS, contact a ZANTAZ account executive at 800-636-0095 or visit www.zantaz.com.